



Anti-Semitism

An Aftermath of the War

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ONE of the most shameful after-war experiences seems to me the fact that every country involved in the great war shows numerous evidences of a widespread revival of the most despicable, brutal, and dangerous form of racial hatred—of anti-Semitism.

In pre-war times, anti-Semitism had no good soil in western and central European countries.

Fairy tales of ritual sacrifices of Christian children, seriously discussed in former generations, had certainly disappeared. And the little group of anti-Semites in the German Reichstag, for instance, was not taken earnestly by most people, but when at the end of the war the coming debacle began to cast its shadows, the anti-Jewish propaganda suddenly sprang up in a most aggressive and dangerous manner.

By pamphlets and placards the Jews were accused of having caused the war, of undermining the front, of making great financial profits out of the great war, in industries, which they were said to have entered in order to avoid service at the front.

Now, there were a number of Jewish people among the thousands and thousands of employes in the numerous war organizations, to be sure.

But, on the other hand, I know by correct statistics that the number of Jewish soldiers, fighting and dying in the world war, was absolutely proportionate to that of the Christians.

Suddenly, an extended anti-Semitic literature of a very low level was thrown on the public; novels, as well as so-called scientific writings, were read, and worst of all, willingly believed by great parts of the population.

Some of these pamphlets hinted at a fantastic program of Jewish imperialism and a secret international organization,

to realize this plan, by overthrowing all non-Jewish governments and substituting therefor a Jewish world domination.

This project was said to be discovered in a mysterious document which was called "The Wise Men of Zion." I shall refer to it later.

As soon as free speech was restored in the belligerent countries, big anti-Semite mass meetings were held.

From my own experience I know of the very low standard and the absolute want of every scientific foundation of the anti-Jewish theories in these meetings. What I think is much more dangerous and deplorable is the ardent endeavoring of the anti-Semites to influence the youth and to infect the schools and universities with their propaganda. And I think it the first and noblest duty of all scholars and teachers and students to protest and to banish this dark spirit from scientific life.

Christians ought to protest also, and should never allow their children's minds to be poisoned by any prejudice, hatred, and vanity on account of race, creed, or nationality. I am not sure who is the most hurt by this sort of propaganda, the poor Jewish child who has to suffer innocently, or the poor Christian child whose soul is poisoned by hatred and self-conceit.

The great danger of the anti-Jewish after-war campaign is the stirring up of all the atavistic instincts and passions sleeping in the depths of human souls from ancient times.

Many of us, I suppose, remember the great tragedy enacted as an epilogue of the war in eastern Europe in 1918-1920.

Thousands of Jewish men, women and children suffered a martyrdom not to be described in the massacres of the Ukraine, of White Russia and Poland. Thousands of Jews were murdered in the most cruel manner. Thousands of girls and women, young girls and young children, were raped in the presence of their husbands and parents; were dishonored and contaminated by venereal diseases to such an extent that a special hospital has had to be built for them.

Jewish houses were looted and whole villages inhabited by Jews were burned down. These word pictures, I think, are sufficient to prove the danger of the extended anti-Semitic propaganda to the western countries which, after the war, are quite open for inspection.

From ancient times to our days, after disastrous catastrophes, people have looked for a scapegoat, finding it very convenient to unload the sins and crimes of their own upon others' shoulders. And the Jews have always had the honor to be this scapegoat.

I do not know much of American anti-Semitism. In Europe we used to believe that the Jewish question was not very urgent in America. I well remember a German author of an essay on the race problem, Dr. Kratz, saying: "The Jewish question is best solved in America, the Jews there being fully acknowledged and melted together with the rest of the popula-

tion." However, some articles of the "Dearborn Independent," the paper of Mr. Henry Ford, and remarks which I occasionally have heard, belie this hopeful state.

In studying the European anti-Jewish question, we find the anti-Semites of today giving us two outstanding reasons for their activities:

1. The race of the Jews.
2. Their efforts to gain the domination of the world.

As we are living in a time of religious tolerance, creed does not play any role. In former times the Jew was burnt for his religion. In the Middle Ages the Crusades were followed by riots against the Jews, and the time when the Jews were hated because of their crucifying Christ, and were accused of ritual murders, is not so very long ago.

A generation ago dear old Europe did not know anything of racial hatred. She left the race problem to her younger sister on the other side of the water, and shed tears of compassion in reading "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

It is through Count Gobineau's book on the inequality of races, which attained a great popularity in Germany, that the problem of "Superior and inferior races" suddenly sprang up.

I must frankly confess that my ardent endeavors to get a clear idea of the real meaning of the word "race," in order to be able to understand race hatred have been a failure.

After studying many books, scientific as well as popular, I am less able to give you any concrete definition than I was before.

To one writer, race is a heritage from times long past, to which you are bound with body and soul.

To the other, race is a future goal, growing and crystallizing in the course of centuries—for instance, the American race.

Some scholars look at the race problem from an ethnographical point of view: others from an anthropological one. Some only refer to a linguistic classification of the world.

When I went to school there were five races, according to the five different continents. Somewhat later, more happy children only had to learn of four races. Since that time the number has been going up and down between two and sixty-four races. Besides, I read of "day races," "night races," and so-called "dawn races."

As to the criterion of a pure race, views differ in a most confusing manner.

According to the well-known anti-Jewish author, Stewart Houston Chamberlain, whose "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century" is among the most important anti-Semitic material, the surest sign of a pure race is the certain knowledge of it in your own heart.

With every progress of science, the problem seems to become more difficult. Even head form and complexion, which for a long time were considered as primary anthropological

characteristics of race, are found to be variable, influenced by temperature and light.

An American scholar, in examining thousands of European emigrants, discovered that children coming over at an early age conserve their original head form, while children born only a few months after the arrival of the mother, have a tendency to show the long, narrow head form of the so-called American race.

Other investigators find a change of the complexion of colored people living in a cooler climate, and of fair people going to the South.

So it is not so very astonishing to hear Professor Virchow declare: "Race distinction is nonsense." And to have Professor Hartman, another investigator, say: "The Aryan race is an invention of the libraries."

I, for my part, oppose every racial hatred, so long as the question of race has not been solved.

Nor do I see any reason to hate and despise an ancient people, the history of which leads upwards from herdsmen and shepherds and wandering tribes to the glory of the kings and prophets; a people with religious and cultural ideas and wealth, from which mankind of today is still profiting; a people who first conceived the idea of a unified God and produced in a simple and powerful style a law, which, after 4,000 years of existence, still covers all needs of mankind.

I should like to invite all anti-Semites, most of whom do not know anything of Jewish culture, to study the history, the poetry, the laws, and customs of the Jews. I should like to remind them of the loveliness of the "Song of Songs," and the splendid vigor of the Psalms, and ask them to try to understand the delicacy of Jewish customs, as, for instance, to use two vessels so as not to boil the lamb in the milk of its mother.

I should like them to remember the social duties, to give to the poor at least a tenth of their income, and part of the yards and fruit in harvest time, and of the wonderful care of widows and orphans, of strangers and travelers, for "Thou, too, hast been a stranger in Egypt," says the law.

We never ought to forget that Jewish civilization gave to the world the greatest benefit of all times—the day of rest and self-reflection in all the noise and trouble of daily life; the Sabbath, of which is written, "Thou shalt hold holy the Sabbath also to your manservant and your maidservant."

We will not close the chapter of Jewish culture without mentioning in this place the commandment most necessary to the world of our days: "Thou shalt not kill." And the wonderful outlook of Israel's greatest prophet, Isaiah: "And He will judge between the nations and will decide concerning many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

As to the legend of the world-wide Jewish conspiracy to bring about the overthrow of all non-Jewish governments, to obliterate all national boundaries, and to destroy all religions other than Judaism, in favor of the "chosen people," Mr. John Spargo has splendidly refuted it in his already cited book, "The Jew and American Ideals," minutely examining the origin and contents of the mysterious document entitled "The Wise Men of Zion."

Mr. Spargo declares it to have been printed first in Russia, in the beginning of our century, and then translated into English and German and published in both countries for purposes of anti-Semitic propaganda. And he comes to the conclusion that "There is not a thing we know about the so-called protocols and their history, which does not point directly to the conclusion that they are forgeries."

I have never understood the fear of the Aryans, to be overwhelmed by such a so-called inferior race, with about 16,000,000 scattered over the world.

It may be that there really is a Jewish question. I believe there is one. The problem of the eastern Jews, for several years overflowing Germany, is a problem for my country and for all countries in which they are going to settle. These fugitives are the poorest and most miserable and uneducated of men.

But, in my opinion, it is not a race problem, but an economic and social problem. It is the problem of the poorest of the poor.

On the other side, the question of enormous wealth and riches in the hands of great Jewish bankers and business men is a problem, too—the problem of the gathering of capital into the hands of the few.

But in both cases these problems are not confined to the Jews alone, and in my opinion they are only to be solved in connection with the great social and economic problems which, in our time, govern the world.

Certainly there is a personal side of the Jewish problem, too.

Surely some of the worst aspects of capitalism have been developed to a special and notable extent by the Jews. But, on the other hand, others have developed the very noblest social idealism.

Certainly there is a type of Jew disagreeable, I know, even to the best of his own people. In looking at this type, I think we had better put the question to ourselves: "Are we quite innocent of having been the cause of what we dislike so much in the Jews?"

The history of the Jews, from the second destruction of the temple at Jerusalem to our days will give us the answer, for it is the tragic history of a scattered and fugitive people, driven all over the earth; the history of contempt and scorn, of oppression and force, of persecution and pogroms; the history of an outcast people, imprisoned in ghettos.

Through centuries the Jews were excluded from many professions, from land ownership and agriculture, and from a thousand benefits of civilization.

In the medieval German-Roman Empire, every sort of money business was considered dishonest and therefore forbidden by the church as well as by the laws.

The Pope and the Bishop, however, as well as the Emperor and Princes, often were in want of money, and looking for someone who could lend it to them. So the dilemma was solved and settled in forcing the Jews, regarded as people without honor, to become money lenders from generation to generation. Should this not perhaps be the explanation for the much-abused Jewish sense for money transactions?

And should not, perhaps, some other Jewish quality so eagerly condemned by Christians of today be more the fruit of the ghetto than of the race?

Is it not almost impossible for a people always despised and trodden upon to develop its best and noblest qualities?

And yet I think all peoples of the world would suffer an enormous loss of culture, of spiritual wealth, if the dream of the Zionists, to return to the land of their fathers, should be realized, and thereby our countries should be deprived of valuable citizens. For there are names connected with all sorts of great inventions and discoveries, with all social and philosophical work and investigation, with literature and music, in every land, which are Jewish names.

During the war, Jewish capital was very welcome to support the Red Cross, to maintain the energy and will for war. Nobody then spoke of a Jewish people. You only heard of French and English and German Jews, and it seems to me a great tragedy that English and German and French Jews, during the war were forced to kill each other, and now after the war once more are regarded one great inferior people.

Jewish mothers gave their sons as Christian mothers did. It seems to me that there is too much bitterness in the experiences they have had to face after the war.

In my opinion, it is not only the duty of the International League, it is the duty of all women, in all countries, to fight this anti-Semitism, wherever they meet it.

It is unworthy of a woman, it is unworthy of a Christian, it is unworthy of mankind to condemn a human being on account of belonging to a certain race or creed or nationality. The only thing worthy of us is to do our best in creating conditions of life which enable everyone to develop his noblest and purest instincts, his talents and gifts.

Not a single one of us has a right to look down upon another as inferior to what he is himself. We are all brothers and sisters, wandering through life to the same end.

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